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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5658
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0304
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0350
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0502
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0314
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFIS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0258

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000842

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM PINR ASEC CASC MR

SUBJECT: SUBJECT: LARGE PROTEST CALLS FOR BREAK WITH ISRAEL

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH LEBARON, REASON 1.4 (B), (D)

Key Points

-- On July 4, several thousand Mauritians participated in a pro-Palestinian rally in the streets of the capital.

-- It reportedly was one of the largest political protests in several years.

-- Feelings among the general Mauritanian population are running high against Israel's efforts in Gaza to force the return of a kidnapped Israeli solider.

(C) Comments

-- Besides its size, the protest was important because it was organized by a newly-formed coalition of political parties.

-- For the coalition to choose a foreign policy issue to galvanize Mauritians and to attract support suggests that foreign policy issues might emerge as an important part of political campaigns, especially since the coalition was able to get so many people out in the street.

-- It also appears that the coalition intentionally organized the July 4th rally to attract attention away from a simultaneous rally by former Minister Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi to announce his candidacy for president. (See septel for more on Abdellahi and other political updates.)

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (U) Several thousand Mauritians participated in a pro-Palestinian rally in the streets of the capital city Nouakchott on July 4. The peaceful rally, organized by a newly-formed political party coalition, ended with speeches calling for Mauritanian unity with the Palestinian people, an end to the U.S.'s supposed biased support of Israel, and a call for the Mauritanian government to sever its diplomatic relations with Israel.

¶2. (U) Embassy personnel observing the protest estimate that between 3,000 and 4,000 people participated. Other estimates

range between 6,000 and 12,000.

¶3. (U) The government allowed the rally to form. However, police and gendarmes prevented participants from marching to the UN building as organizers had planned. RSO, who observed the protest, saw several younger rally participants attempting to incite the rally leaders to move through the police line. However, these leaders obeyed police instructions and continued the rally to its designated ending spot across the street from the Ministry of Oil.

¶4. (U) Post has not determined any current threat to the Embassy or American community posed by these events, but anti-American slogans appeared during the protest.

¶5. (U) The rally followed a smaller "sit-in" of several hundred people July 2 at the Palestinian Mission in Nouakchott that advanced the same messages.

-LeBaron
LeBaron